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ABSTRACT

CHOICE, Center for Helping Organizations Improve Choice in Education, has four primary purposes: (1) to collect and make available to the higher education community knowledge and materials relating to the provision of better information to college applicants; (2) to provide technical assistance to institutions seeking to review or improve the information they provide to applicants; (3) to assess the impact of "improved" information on students' college selections and on institutional operations; and (4) to contribute to the development of policy alternatives for use by governmental and nongovernmental bodies active in the area of information for prospective students. This report provides information on "Focus on CHOICE," a slide-tape presentation that describes some of the history of current views of students as consumers in higher education and some implications for the future, discusses the rationale behind increasing federal and state involvement in regulating the information provided to the college applicant, provides brief examples of what some colleges and universities have already done on their own, summarizes the work of the National Task Force on Better Information for Student Choice (1975-77), and outlines the ways in which CHOICE hopes to extend the Task Force's efforts. Also included is a summary of what becoming a CHOICE cooperating institution involves, and how to apply to become one. (Author/SPG)

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GUIDE TO CHOICE

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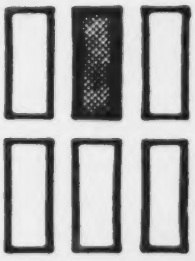
FOR

HELPING ORGANIZATIONS

IMPROVE CHOICE IN EDUCATION



CHOICE

CENTER FOR HELPING ORGANIZATIONS IMPROVE CHOICE IN EDUCATION

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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GUIDE TO CHOICE

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CHOICE Staff, Consultants and Advisory Board

Department of Higher/Postsecondary Education

CHOICE AND ITS SERVICES

CHOICE*, A Center for Helping Organizations Improve Choice in Education, has four primary purposes: 1) to collect and make available to the higher education community knowledge and materials relating to the provision of better information to college applicants; 2) to provide technical assistance to institutions seeking to review or improve the information they provide to applicants; 3) to assess the impact of "improved" information on students' college selections and on institutional operations; 4) to contribute to the development of policy alternatives for use by governmental and nongovernmental bodies active in the area of information for prospective students.

A variety of events and forces have led to the formation of CHOICE: the increasing diversity of higher education students and opportunities; the increased availability of state and federal student financial aid funds, and the subsequent efforts of governmental bodies to protect the investment of these funds through "truth-in-advertising" legislation; a growing consumer-consciousness among students applying to higher education institutions; and public challenges to certain competitive student recruitment practices.

The CHOICE project was undertaken in the belief that new informational practices which originate at the institutional, rather than governmental, level are more likely to meet simultaneously the needs of students for accurate information, and of institutions to portray their distinctive features and programs. CHOICE believes, further, that the development of such practices and policies, to be effective, must be based on consensus and commitment within an institution, and on cooperation among institutions. We believe, finally, that colleges and universities have an educational responsbility to provide applicants with

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**A three-year project supported by the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education and based in the Department of Higher/Postsecondary Education at Syracuse University.*

the information they need to make an informed selection of a college, but also that the development and provision of such information will contribute to institutional improvement through self-review and assessment, better public relations, and increased cooperation among segments of the institutional community.

CHOICE has a variety of services available to higher education institutions. A newsletter will be mailed periodically to every institution in the country describing recent efforts to provide applicants with improved information, summarizing federal and state activities or legislation in the "student-consumer" area, and advising readers of resource materials that are available. Some of these materials may be developed elsewhere, others will be developed by CHOICE, including literature reviews, research reports, position papers, and handbooks. CHOICE will also provide short-term advising services to institutions requesting assistance; such services might include status reports on pending legislation at the federal level, providing the names of persons responsible for state or federal "new information" programs, suggestions of how to begin a review of one's information programs, or a linking service to appropriate consultants. These materials and services will be available to all institutions free or at cost.

At another level, CHOICE will work intensively with a small number of selected "cooperating" institutions that are ready and willing to undertake close examinations of their current information practices and to develop new ones in cooperation with other institutions. This portion of the project is intended to extend the efforts of the recent National Task Force on Better Information not only through the development of new campus-initiated information materials, but also through the development of information which is comparable across institutions of similar type. (Cooperating institutions will not be in competition with one another for students.) This cooperative effort is intended to afford participating institutions (and CHOICE) an opportunity to assess the outcomes of providing more comprehensive

information to students. While a number of institutions have already changed or added to the information they provide to applicants, little has been done to determine the influences of this new information on either students or institutions. Finally, cooperating institutions will be asked to share their experiences and knowledge with other institutions.

"Focus on CHOICE"

A SLIDE-TAPE PRESENTATION

PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

"Focus on CHOICE" has two primary purposes: to provide information and to encourage discussion of possible alternatives open to colleges in improving information, of what recent student consumer information laws might mean for your institution, of alternatives to federal leadership in improving information, and whether your college might benefit from cooperative efforts with CHOICE and other institutions.

The slide-tape describes some of the history of current views of students as consumers in higher education and some implications for the future. The rationale behind increasing federal and state involvement in regulating the information provided to college applicants ~~is~~ discussed, and brief examples of what some colleges and universities have already done on their own are described. The work of the National Task Force on Better Information for Student Choice (1975-77) is summarized, and the ways in which CHOICE hopes to extend the Task Force's efforts are outlined. The presentation closes with a description of services CHOICE is prepared to offer to all institutions, as well as those it offers to schools wishing to become "cooperating institutions."

USE OF SLIDE-TAPE

The slides for the presentation should be loaded in a projector tray with the numbers in the upper right corner facing the rear of a carousel projector, unnumbered side of slide frame facing the screen. The accompanying tape cartridge contains the audio narrative on both sides: Side 1 has a 1,000 hz. inaudible pulse (signal) and will change slides automatically when used on most synchronized slide-tape playback systems with projector set for manual operation. Side 2 contains an audible beep indicating when the slide should be changed manually. Whichever type of tape recorder is used, we strongly urge that the

presentation be previewed to test the audio-visual equipment, insure that slides are their correct order and position, and, where necessary, to permit the equipment operator to become familiar with the presentation and timing of audible beeps.

As noted, one of the principal purposes of "Focus on CHOICE" is to encourage discussion of possible benefits of "better information" for both institutions and prospective students. Our experience at several institutions, as well as that of members of the National Task Force on Better Information, suggests that the most interesting and informative discussions of this topic and its implications occur when a wide variety of persons participate. We strongly encourage you to involve a variety of senior-level administrators, faculty members and students, as well as admissions and financial aid staff, when viewing and discussing the slide-tape presentation. Approximately an hour and one-half should be set aside for the meeting.

EVALUATION

We are asking viewers at randomly selected institutions to respond to a brief questionnaire at the end of the discussion period. If you received questionnaires, we will appreciate your assistance in collecting reactions to the entire program (slide-tape and other materials). Kindly return evaluations with slides and tape.

RETURN OF SLIDE-TAPE

So that we may respond promptly to other requests we will appreciate it if you will return the slides and cassette to us within two days of the presentation. You are welcome to keep the printed materials.

"Focus on CHOICE"

DISCUSSION GUIDE

"Focus on CHOICE" is obviously a substitute for a visit to your campus. While it may allow your group to discuss our services and their rationale at a time convenient for you, the disadvantage of the mailed slide-tape presentation is that some questions may arise to which a discussion leader may not feel ready to respond. To help fill that gap:

1. We have prepared a list of common questions and answers for the discussion leader's use. We have found that these topics frequently arise in discussions of "consumerism" and "consumer protection" in higher education. The responses are intended to cover the range of points relevant to each issue. Discussion leaders will want to review these questions and answers before the presentation to decide whether they will be helpful.

2. In the expectation that concrete examples may help to clarify the slide-tape presentation, we have supplied a set of "CHOICE Samplers" which illustrate what some institutions have already tried to do in improving information for prospective students.

3. A CHOICE staff member will be glad to talk with your group by phone during your discussion which follows the presentation. Simply let us know in advance when to be at our end of the line: (315) 423-3701.

4. Should your group/institution conclude that further discussion or commitment of time and resources to improving information is valuable and desirable, may we suggest that you designate someone to accept responsibility for the next steps -- either additional discussion or completion of the enclosed application form.

QUESTIONS COMMONLY RAISED

Q: IS THE STUDENT-AS-CONSUMER ANALOGY APPROPRIATE TO HIGHER EDUCATION?

A: Yes and No. Many educators correctly assert that students are not consumers because they do not purchase educational services passively. Rather, students actively participate in the educational process and share the responsibility for its outcomes. Similarly, many hold that extensive public support for postsecondary education makes society, rather than the individual student, the consumer and bill-payer. Benefits of education which accrue to society as well as to the individual also strain the notion that students are consumers in the usual sense of the word. In these respects, the analogy is a poor one.

Nevertheless, students are "contractors" for educational services; they decide which service to obtain and where. The focus of information improvement is to enable the student to make the most personally advantageous choice so that the funds for education, both individual and public, will bring the greatest benefit. Including money, time, and personal involvement, a college education is one of the largest investments a person makes in a lifetime. Excepting marriage, the decision to attend or not attend college, and where to attend, may have a greater subsequent impact on students' lives than any other decisions they might make.

Q: WILL OUR INSTITUTION RISK ENROLLMENT DECLINES BY PRESENTING MORE CANDID AND COMPREHENSIVE INFORMATION ABOUT ITSELF?

A: No one is sure. There is evidence that students are becoming increasingly suspicious of information materials provided by colleges. This suspicion has been fueled by extensive publicity about educational frauds and by governmental mandates for certain types of information. Logic would dictate that a college which documents the information it provides, includes opinions of enrolled students, and conscientiously attempts to guide students to the proper choice of educational services would rise in stature and credibility among applicants. This view is

similar to the recent focus on marketing in admissions which encourages institutions to target their publicity at those students most likely to fit the institutional program and to be able to afford the school.

Colleges which have presented more candid information to students have not experienced enrollment changes attributable to new information. We do not know whether the types of students attracted have actually changed. CHOICE hopes to document such possible changes over the next three years in its work with cooperating institutions. One prominent campus administrator who has been involved in the improved information movement has stressed that the risk of not fully informing students about the college is at least equal to or greater than the risk of doing so. Another administrator has said that every college cannot expect to be number one in every service it provides; it can, however, develop information which makes evident its unique qualities and demonstrable strong points.

Q: HOW LIKELY IS THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT TO FORCE COLLEGES TO DEVELOP MORE COMPREHENSIVE INFORMATION MATERIALS IF COLLEGES DO NOT DO SO VOLUNTARILY?

A: The Consumer Information Provisions of the Education Amendments of 1976 already require colleges participating in federal funding programs (the vast majority) to distribute certain types of information. (A summary of the types of information is included in the appendix.) It is well-known that the federal agencies responsible for enforcing such regulations are understaffed, but the Department of Health, Education and Welfare has been reorganizing for more efficient compliance efforts. It may be some time before institutions are forced to comply; most institutions will comply voluntarily well before such an event.

The federal regulations have left much discretion to institutions; the details of information presentation are not very specific. Some states, however, such as New York, have recently adopted legislation paralleling the federal statutes but in much more detailed form, including formats for presenting certain information. (See appendix)

Q: WHY SHOULD WE DO ANYTHING OTHER THAN THE MINIMUM NECESSARY TO COMPLY WITH FEDERAL MANDATES?

A: Minimum compliance is likely to be misleading to students and disadvantageous to institutions. The law encourages students to make comparisons which cannot be meaningfully made without further interpretation and the development of normative guidelines. For example, every institution must provide statistics regarding the rate of completion of its students. Such data are apparently seen by government regulators and some segments of the public as indicators of educational quality. But educators know that all students do not enter with the intention of obtaining a degree, some students leave for purely personal reasons, and some students who change institutions do so because this is educationally sound for them. All attrition is not an indictment of the school; the reasons for attrition must be supplied in order to make the raw data interpretable by students.

A similar professional obligation to provide interpretation relates to the job placement statistics required under Guaranteed Student Loan Program regulations. For some types of colleges, job placement one year after graduation is a good indicator of future careers; for other types of colleges, an assessment ten years after graduation makes more sense. Such statistics need interpretation too, in terms of the local job market, the national occupational outlook, and in terms of the likelihood that entering students will change their original plans for a field of study.

Colleges need to examine their purposes, programs and student clientele to decide what types of statistics are necessary to supplement the data required by federal agencies, then determine what guidelines and norms should be published to help students distinguish between institutions and programs of different types. As a byproduct, educational institutions have a professional obligation to present such findings to the lawmakers in hopes of avoiding further regulation which is costly, may be inherently uninterpretable, and is not based on sound educational practice.

Q: WON'T MAKING OUR INFORMATION MORE SPECIFIC GET US INTO LEGAL PROBLEMS WITH STUDENTS TRYING TO HOLD US TO PROMISES IN COLLEGE BULLETINS?

A: Probably not. A number of court cases are pending regarding information given to students both before and after admission; the outcomes are still uncertain. In general, courts have been reluctant to intervene in educational matters. An institution is probably better off to have stated a policy and abided by it than not to have stated it at all; and better off to have had on-campus procedures for checking the accuracy of information and resolving disputes than not to have had such procedures. Answering the question, "What is likely to happen to me?" for prospective students does not require predictions which a student may later challenge. Rather, it requires reporting what has happened to actual students, and results derived from surveys of enrolled student opinions and experiences. As one administrator said, "You can't be sued for reporting accurately what current students think or for reporting statistical facts about the college. You could be sued for deliberately withholding information needed by a student to make a meaningful decision or for coloring information to make it uniformly positive."

Q: HOW CAN WE FIND EVIDENCE THAT OUR CAMPUS NEEDS AND COULD BENEFIT FROM AN INFORMATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM?

A: There are some simple ways to find out without engaging in an extensive research project. Gather a random group of about twenty students representing a broad cross-section of the student body. Similarly, gather a group of administrators and faculty. Ask them to go through the materials presently supplied to prospective students and circle all the points 1) that they believe are inaccurate or of questionable accuracy; 2) about which they believe prospective students need additional information to make a competent decision about

attendance; and 3)that would be less ambiguous if documentation were included. You might wish to conduct such an activity without any organizing guidelines or to use the list of information goals given in the "CHOICE Sampler."

Another good reference to use is New Expectations for Fair Practice, a booklet which probably has been supplied to your campus president by the American Council on Education. (If not, write the ACE at One DuPont Circle, Washington, D.C., 20036 for a free copy.)

Q: HOW MUCH WILL IT COST OUR COLLEGE TO JOIN IN THE INFORMATION IMPROVEMENT EFFORT?

A: The costs will vary with the size and type of college and the scope of the project to be undertaken. Most colleges revise their catalogs and bulletins at substantial cost every year or two in any case. The additional time and expense of a cursory examination and possible revision will result from 1) involvement of more staff and students in identifying gaps or inaccuracies in present information materials, and 2) compiling data which are not on hand but are determined by your institution to be important to prospective students.

As we indicated in "Focus on CHOICE," however, there are many benefits to be gained from a more thorough examination, one which involves a wide spectrum of the campus community and achieves substantial visibility. The cost of a full information improvement project will be returned in benefits such as acquisition of data for better understanding of how students make decisions about a given college, increased inter-office cooperation, and information for long-range planning. An example of the latter might be a determination (and publication) of the percent of entering students who change their major field after entrance. Such data is useful to students, merits comparative norms for different types of institutions and programs, and has value for longe-range planning of staff and facilities.

One way to undertake a full examination of information practices is to become a CHOICE cooperating institution. The cost of full participa-

tion in CHOICE will be somewhat greater than a "do-it-yourself" effort because we envision a thorough self-examination of campus information programs and some data collection to help the institution assess its efforts. But CHOICE is prepared to make available expert advice on self-examination and on research and evaluation designs. Later in this booklet, "Guide to CHOICE," we have estimated some costs to cooperating institutions and detailed the CHOICE contributions.

Q: WHAT ARE THE MAJOR STUMBLING BLOCKS TO EXAMINATION OF OUR INFORMATION PROGRAM?

A: The greatest initial stumbling block is an attitude among many key administrators and faculty that the less you tell prospective students about the college the better. The obvious counterargument is that mismatches between students and institutions which result from lack of information are expensive for both the student and the college. Students who feel they misjudged the college are likely to withdraw quickly; some colleges report that such discontented students in dormitories and gathering places tends to multiply discontent among other students.

A related issue is the potential resistance of many campus units which may bear the brunt of new data collection, may be independently producing information which is inconsistent, or which circumvent accepted institutional policies. Unit autonomy is valuable but a central effort can usually make such bulletins more useful to students and more beneficial to the department or office which produces them.

Institutions in the National Task Force on Better Information for Student Choice reported little problem with the argument that information should be withheld, once they had engaged their campus community in a discussion of the benefits of the projects. Overcoming the problems of missing data was more difficult. Some campuses do not keep records that will enable them to answer the various aspects of the question, "What is likely to happen to me if I enroll?" Or, if data are available, they may not be in usable form. The status quo

ranges from campuses which do not have firm estimates of how many students enrolled or were granted financial aid to those that have documented the characteristics of entering students and the outcomes of graduates. Documentation becomes increasingly important as higher education is called upon to defend its claims before funding agencies and the public. Much information prepared for prospective students, while difficult to gather initially, will be useful for other purposes.

USE OF THE "CHOICE SAMPLER"

The "CHOICE Sampler" illustrates some types of more comprehensive information that institutions in the National Task Force on Better Information for Student Choice presented to prospective students. It also includes some guidelines which Task Force colleges developed and found useful. The sample materials are arranged in such a way that you may use them during the group discussion or to bring particular (samples) to someone's attention. We have supplied two sets: feel free to xerox, make overhead visuals, or otherwise reproduce the materials to suite your needs.

The examples come from community colleges, universities, liberal arts colleges and proprietary schools and reflect the differing purposes, programs and students at these diverse institutions. In order to present the samples clearly in a limited space, we have abridged or adapted some of them. Please consider them merely representative of "new" information which might be given to students. Remember, too, that the examples were originally seen in a context of other appropriate information about an institution.

Many more illustrations are given in Inside Information, a handbook of Task Force materials is available from the American Association for Higher Education.* A chart from the handbook displaying the types of information presented by each Task Force institution is included in the Sampler.

*See Bibliography

WHAT DOES BECOMING A CHOICE COOPERATING INSTITUTION INVOLVE?

CHOICE seeks to involve a group of twenty colleges and universities in an intensive, cooperative effort to provide more comprehensive and accurate information to prospective students and to assess the impacts of providing that information on both students' college selections and institutional operations. The project is intended to demonstrate that institutions can, on their own initiative, develop new kinds of information which permit more informed selections of colleges by students and which, at the same time, permit institutions to portray themselves accurately. "Focus on CHOICE" and the Discussion Guide in the preceding section of this booklet point out some of the institutional benefits to be gained from such institutional initiatives; the "CHOICE Sampler" contains illustrative examples of the "new" information some institutions are already providing to prospective students.

The sections which follow summarize what becoming a CHOICE cooperating institution will involve.

AN ON-CAMPUS PROJECT

Cooperating institutions will undertake a careful review of their current information programs for describing themselves to prospective students and will develop new forms or types of information which, in their judgment, will permit applicants to develop a clearer understanding of what the institution is like, what programs and services are available, and what to expect upon enrollment.

Based on the recommendations of the National Task Force on Better Information for Student Choice, CHOICE will encourage cooperating institutions to build the following components into their on-campus projects: 1) direction of the project by a senior-level administrator

with authority to make decisions and commit necessary staff and resources; 2) the close involvement of students, faculty, and administrators in the development and review of new information; 3) considerable campus visibility for the project; and 4) careful planning and execution, with clear statements of goals and time-lines. Costs associated with the development and presentation of the new information will be borne by cooperating institutions.

SUMMER WORKSHOP

Each cooperating institution will be expected to name a three-person team to attend a five-day workshop in June, 1978. Cooperating institutions will be expected to pay half the travel and per diem costs (approximately $800) associated with their team's attendance at the workshop, and CHOICE will pay the remaining half of these expenses. Workshop sessions will deal with current models of information improvement, strategies for facilitating such improvement on one's own campus, and methods of collecting and presenting "new information." Workshop faculty will include members of the recent National Task Force on Better Information and the director and assistant director of CHOICE. Important objectives of the workshop include the development of a general plan for one's own on-campus project and the arrival at preliminary agreements (among cooperating institutions, or groups of them) to collect and present certain comparable types of information.

COOPERATION WITH OTHER PARTICIPATING INSTITUTIONS

CHOICE expects that each cooperating institution will, to a large extent, define for itself those information items it desires to present to applicants in more comprehensive fashion. Groups of institutions interested in providing similar generic types of information will, however, be strongly encouraged to work together to devise and utilize

consistent data definitions and methods of presentation in order that we may begin to develop formats and types of information which facilitate students' comparisons among institutions of similar types. (Cooperating institutions will ordinarily not be in competition with one another for students. In addition to its long-range importance for students, the need for comparability is related to project research and evaluation efforts, discussed below.)

Perhaps all institutions can quickly agree to present a few items of information in a similar way; some institutions may be willing to tackle a few of the more complex and politically sensitive information items. CHOICE will attempt to select groups of institutions interested in similar types of information development, whether easy or difficult.

RESEARCH PROJECT

New federal and state laws ensuring that prospective college students will receive designated types of information have been introduced rapidly despite the lack of knowledge about such information's relevance to educational decisions and institutional operations. One of the goals of CHOICE is to evaluate whether new information released by institutions is useful for student decision making. CHOICE will need to survey at random applicants and/or admitted students who receive current information and those who receive newly constituted information.

In order to assess changes in organizational practices due to the information improvement project, it will also be necessary to survey attitudes of current faculty and staff before and after the project and to ask for brief progress reports from the on-campus CHOICE cooperating team.

CHOICE will develop the research designs, review all surveys with the cooperating institutions in advance, conduct data analyses and

report to each institution. Survey management and data collection will, however, be the responsibility of each participating institution. No survey will attempt to influence student decisions about attending the college.

CHOICE DISSEMINATION NETWORK

CHOICE assumes that a movement toward more comprehensive and accurate information for students is most likely to occur in the higher education community if colleges share their experiences. It is particularly important that governmental agencies and the public be aware of the willingness of colleges to cooperate in self-improvement.

Consequently, CHOICE hopes that the on-campus project teams from cooperating institutions will be willing to serve as consultants, on a paid basis, to other colleges which may request CHOICE services in 1979-81. Consultation teams will be constituted from the pool of project leaders from cooperating institutions according to the needs of the institution requesting service. Each consultant would be assigned a maximum of fifteen consulting days per year at one hundred dollars a day plus expenses, the fees and expenses to be borne by the institution requesting the service and payable to the cooperating institutions. CHOICE will require colleges requesting consultation to contract for at least five days of assistance to ensure that a project is carefully planned-- perhaps three days to help a project get underway; one day while the project is in progress; and two days to assist with project evaluation and future planning.

In addition, CHOICE hopes that on-campus project teams will be willing to discuss their experiences at professional conferences, where appropriate, and/or to write reports useful to others.

Tentatively, CHOICE plans a conference in summer 1979 at which

project leaders from cooperating institutions that have engaged in an on-campus project would reassemble to compare notes. Other interested colleges would be invited to participate. Funds are being sought for such a conference; currently, we would expect cooperating colleges to pay the expenses of one representative.

CHOICE CONTRIBUTIONS

CHOICE will make the following contributions to the cooperative project:

Consulting Services - Information Development

CHOICE staff members will be available by telephone on a continuing basis and for limited site visits throughout the on-campus projects to advise on the process or content of developing new information on your campus.

Consulting Services - Research and Evaluation

CHOICE will design appropriate studies to assess the effectiveness and impacts of the new information on both new students and institutional operations. These services will also include advice on data collection and preparation procedures, responsibility for all data analyses, and preparation of reports to cooperating institutions.

Educational Services - Workshop

CHOICE will cover all costs of planning, staffing and conducting the workshop, and will assume half of the actual travel and per diem costs of each three-person team's attendance.

Workshop Training Materials

CHOICE will supply papers, manuals and handbooks for all workshop participants.

Other Resource Materials

CHOICE will provide literature reviews, position papers, technical manuals and other resource materials at no cost over a two-year period.

A table summarizing the projected costs of participation to cooperating institutions and the contribution of CHOICE appears on the next page.

ESTIMATED INSTITUTIONAL AND CHOICE CONTRIBUTIONS TO COOPERATIVE PROJECT

INSTITUTION'S CONTRIBUTION TO PARTICIPATION		CHOICE CONTRIBUTION TO PARTICIPATION - EACH INSTITUTION	
One-half of actual travel and per diem costs for three-person team to attend summer workshop	$800*	One-half of actual travel and per diem costs for three-person team to attend summer workshop	$800*
		Estimated value of consultant and planning services at summer workshop at $350 per participant	1050
		Workshop training materials	150
Estimated staff time for data collection directly related to cooperative research efforts, 30 days at $75 per day during 1978-79	2250	Technical services provided by CHOICE over two year period; data analyses for institutional self-planning, reports; consulting services, literature	2000
Survey materials and mailings	1000		
Staff time away from campus to provide consulting services to other colleges during 1978-80, maximum 30 days at $75	6750	Potential consultant fees of staff when serving other colleges during 1978-80, maximum 30 days at $100	9000
Total estimate - institution	$10,800**	Total estimate -CHOICE	$13,000**

** For colleges west of the Mississippi, the maximum allowable CHOICE contribution to travel and per diem expenses is $800.*

*** Estimated totals cover a two-year period.*

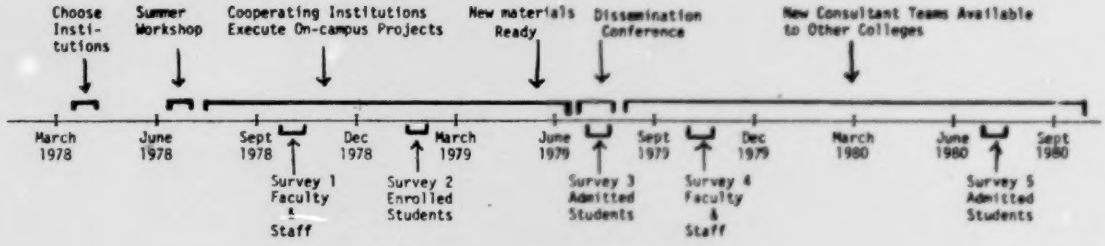
COSTS TO INSTITUTION FOR ON-CAMPUS INFORMATION IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

Clearly, the costs of on-campus projects will vary with the size of the college and the types of activities undertaken. They will include staff time, costs of data collection to prepare new information, and telphone. In most cases, the project will involve redirecting activities already underway. Whether or not an institution joins the CHOICE cooperative project, some new costs for data collection will be incurred as institutions revise bulletins to comply with new federal requirements effective in 1978. Such costs might be offset to some extent by federal administrative allowances earmarked for this purpose. The publication costs of a bulletin, viewbook or other vehicle containing the new information are probably already included in the present institutional budget.

COOPERATIVE PROJECT TIME LINE

A tentative time-line for the cooperative project is given below. It is important to note that materials developed in the on-campus projects will be finished at different times for different institutions. It is desirable, however, that the new materials be ready for distribution to prospective students in fall 1979.

Project CHOICE Time-line for Cooperative Project



The dates of data collection for the research effort have been chosen to allow comparison of students receiving current materials and those receiving newly developed materials. A copy of the entire research design is available upon request. The types of data to be collected in each survey are outlined below:

Survey 1 September 1978. Survey of faculty and staff attitudes toward providing new information and toward related aspects of institutional functioning.

Survey 2 February 1979. Survey of currently enrolled students. Information collected may serve as basis for some of the "new" information being developed and for subsequent project evaluation purposes.

Survey 3 July 1979. Survey of newly admitted students who plan to enroll and who have seen the "old" information. (The "new information"development will still be in progress at this time.)

Survey 4 October 1979. Survey of faculty and staff attitudes following completion of on-campus project.

Survey 5 July 1980. Survey of newly admitted students planning to enroll and who have seen the "new information."

Whenever possible, data collections will be made from random samples of students, faculty and staff to minimize problems and expenses. Since the types of information to be developed by institutions will vary to some extent, and the types of students will also vary, surveys will be developed with special sections for individual institutions and common sections to facilitate comparisons.

APPLYING TO BECOME
A
CHOICE COOPERATING INSTITUTION

A college wishing to become a cooperating institution should discuss fully the likely benefits and commitments of participation before applying. Our slide-tape presentation, "Focus on CHOICE," as well as this "Guide to CHOICE" and the "CHOICE Sampler," have been provided to facilitate this process. In addition, the CHOICE staff will be happy to talk with prospective applicants and give additional advice in assessing whether participation as a cooperating institution, or use of other CHOICE services, is likely to be most beneficial to your school.

If your decision is to apply, the enclosed application should be completed and returned by April 15, 1978. The application is intended to help us identify those institutions that can most profitably work together and with CHOICE in developing improved campus-based information, in assessing the impact of that information on student decision making and institutional operations, and in disseminating the knowledge and skills gained to other colleges and universities.

The application consists of five parts:

Part I — Institutional data.

Part II — A Self-Assessment Checklist indicating the present status and potential for future development of specific information items for distribution to prospective students.

Part III — An assessment of willingness to assist with the research and evaluation aspects of Project CHOICE.

Part IV — An assessment of willingness to share experiences with other institutions.

Part V — An assessment of expected institutional gains from participation and planned operation of the project.

The application looks longer than it is. Parts I through IV are in short-answer format; only Part V requires open-ended responses, and many of the questions can be answered briefly. Advance discussion with those persons most likely to be directly affected will greatly facilitate completion of the application form.

CRITERIA FOR SELECTING COOPERATING INSTITUTIONS

Since CHOICE can work intensively and effectively with only twenty colleges, we are interested in gathering a group that is sufficiently diverse to attempt information improvement for different types of students in different types of institutions. At the same time, however, we hope to select schools which can work together in small groups to concentrate on certain types of information problems which seem most pressing and appropriate to them.

Cooperating institutions will be selected on the basis of the following criteria:

1. Evidence of commitment to producing more comprehensive information for prospective students.
2. Evidence of ability to conduct a successful on-campus information project.
3. Willingness to reach agreement with other cooperating institutions on consistent and comparable ways of defining and presenting information.
4. Willingness to cooperate in a research effort to determine the impact of better information on students and institutions.
5. Willingness to share knowledge gained with other institutions.

Following April 1, 1978, CHOICE will select approximately forty institutions which seem to best meet the above criteria, taking into account geographic distribution, similarity of interests and diversity of institutions. The final twenty cooperating institutions will be jointly selected by CHOICE and the members of its advisory board and will be notified in early May, 1978.

APPENDIX

SUMMARY OF CONSUMER INFORMATION PROVISIONS, EDUCATION AMENDMENTS OF 1976

THIS BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE STUDENT CONSUMER INFORMATION PROVISIONS OF THE EDUCATION AMENDMENTS OF 1976 IS PROVIDED FOR VIEWERS OF "Focus on CHOICE" WHO MAY DESIRE GENERAL BACKGROUND. THIS TREATMENT HAS BEEN SIMPLIFIED AND SHOULD NOT BE CONSIDERED OFFICIAL. REFERENCES TO OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS ARE APPENDED.

The intent of the federal law and its implementing regulations [*treated in italics*] is to insure that students applying for financial aid under any of the programs administered by the Office of Education under Title IV of the Higher Education Act, or any other financial aid program, receive information about available aid and about the institution in which they plan to enroll. Thus, while the information which colleges must disseminate to prospective students emphasizes financial aid practices and policies, the requirements extend to other aspects of the institution judged by the lawmakers to be important to prospective students.[1]

In effect, if the Commissioner of Education determines that an institution has failed to disseminate some item of information required under Section 493A or has made a "substantial misrepresentation" under Section 497A, he may limit, suspend or terminate the institution's federal eligibility for all of the Title IV student-aid programs.[2]

The law took effect July 1, 1977. Implementing regulations were finalized in the FEDERAL REGISTER on December 1, 1977, and took effect January 15, 1977.

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[1] *Section 493A of Public Law 94-482, passed October 12, 1976.*

[2] *Guaranteed Student Loan Program, Section 428(e); Basic Education Opportunity Grant, Section 411(d); Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant, College Work Study Program and National Direct Student Loan Program, Section 493.*

APPENDIX

Section 493A

Each institution of higher education which receives administrative allowance payments under the student-aid programs shall make readily available through appropriate publications and mailing to current and prospective students who request them [*a prospective student is one who has made an inquiry pertinent to enrolling*], the following items:

Accurate descriptions of:

A. the student financial assistance programs available to students who enroll at the institution [*all programs, not just federal programs*]
B. the method by which such assistance is distributed among student recipients who enroll
C. the means by which application is made, requirements for accurately preparing such an application, and the review standards employed to make awards for student financial assistance [*criteria for selecting awardees, criteria for student eligibility, criteria for determining financial need*]
D. the rights and responsibilities of students receiving financial assistance under the Title IV programs,and the amount of a student's award [*criteria for academic good standing and satisfactory progress of students; means and frequency of payment; terms and sample repayment schedules for loans; terms of employment for work grants*]
E. the cost of attending the institution including: tuition and fees; books and supplies; estimates of typical student room and board costs or typical community living costs; any additional costs of the program in which the student is enrolled or expresses a specific interest
F. the refund policy of the institution for the return of unearned tuition and other fees

G. the academic program of the institution, including:

the current degree programs and other educational and training programs

the instructional, laboratory and other physical plant facilities which relate to the academic program

the faculty and other instructional personnel

data regarding student retention at the institution and, when available, the number and percentage of students completing the programs in which the student is enrolled or expresses interest [*taking into account the enrollment pattern of the institution and including a description of students that were included and excluded in compiling the retention information*]

H. (the title of) each person (full time employee) designated who may be contacted by the student seeking required information and location and means by which the person may be contacted. [*The Commissioner of Education may waive under certain conditions for small colleges*]

The institution must use its administrative cost allowance from financial aid programs first to carry out these provisions; any remainder may be applied toward other administrative costs of the programs.

TECHNICAL NOTES

The Guaranteed Student Loan Program is found at 20 U.S. Code 1087. The Higher Education Act of 1965, Title IV which established the aid programs referenced, is found at 20 U.S. Code 1088. Implementing regulations are found in 45 Code of Federal Regulations, parts 177 and 178, respectively. A discussion of the initially proposed implementing regulations and the law may be found in the FEDERAL REGISTER of April 8, 1977, and of the final regulations in the FEDERAL REGISTER of December 1, 1977, Vol. 42, No. 231, 61043-61047.

APPENDIX

NEW YORK STATE CONSUMER INFORMATION

SOME STATES, SUCH AS NEW YORK, HAVE ADOPTED LAWS AND REGULATIONS SIMILAR TO THE FEDERAL CONSUMER INFORMATION PROVISIONS BUT HAVE WRITTEN THE IMPLEMENTING REGULATIONS IN MORE SPECIFIC TERMS. THE FOLLOWING ITEMS SUMMARIZE THE DIFFERENCES FROM THE FEDERAL REGULATIONS CONTAINED IN NEW YORK STATE LAW (SECTION 607 OF THE EDUCATION LAW) AND THE REGULATIONS OF THE STATE COMMISSIONER OF EDUCATION (PART 53).

The New York regulations:

1. Cover all degree granting and other licensed postsecondary schools.
2. Add members of the general public as potential recipients of the information items if they make a request.
3. In financial aid policies, specify definitions of emancipated student status, and specify in detail the state and federal assistance programs for which descriptions must be provided.
4. Specify some details of providing student budgets, separately itemized.
5. Specify that the list of degree, certificate or diploma programs shall be described in terms consistent with the Inventory of Registered Degree and Certificate Programs for New York State
6. Specify that each degree, certificate, or diploma program shall be described in terms of both prerequisites and requirements for completion.
7. Specify that the academic year in which a course is expected to be offered be given as well as the conditions under which a course may be withdrawn.
8. Specify that faculty must be listed by rank, highest degree and institution granting degree, major program area. An estimate of the number of adjunct faculty and teaching assistants in each program area must be given.
9. Specify particular physical facilities which must be described and operating hours given.
10. Specify that student cohort survival data must be supplied, consistent with data reported through the state Higher Education Data System.

11. Require studies of placement of graduates, format not specified. (In this case the state complies with the particular provisions of the Guaranteed Loan Program; placement was not specified in the Education Amendments of 1976.)
12. Specify format of information for some items.
    Require statements indicating when more than one catalog is in use.
    Require warnings about out-of-date information
    Implement rules with next printing of college bulletin
    Require that advertisements clearly note the availability of more extensive information

APPENDIX

EDUCATIONAL INFORMATION CENTERS

*THE DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATIONAL INFORMATION CENTERS MAY HAVE A SIGNIFICANT EFFECT ON THE MANNER IN WHICH INFORMATION IS DELIVERED TO PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS OVER THE NEXT SEVERAL YEARS. THIS BRIEF REVIEW IS PROVIDED FOR VIEWERS OF "Focus on CHOICE" WHO MAY NEED GENERAL BACKGROUND. FOR AN OFFICIAL STATEMENT REFER TO THE EDUCATION AMENDMENTS OF 1976 (PUBLIC LAW 94-482, SECTIONS 418A AND 418B).**

The term Educational Information Center refers to any institution or agency (or combination thereof) organized to provide the services listed below within a geographic area reasonably accessible to the general public:

1. services designed to seek out persons who could benefit from post-secondary education except for specific barriers or lack of information, and encourage their participation in full time or part time study

2. provide information and referral services to citizens with regard to

   a) postsecondary education and training programs in the region, and application procedures

   b) available Federal, State and other financial assistance and application procedures

   c) available assistance for job placement and gaining admission to programs to train for careers and skill upgrading

   d) competency-based learning opportunities, testing of competencies and obtaining credit and advance placement in postsecondary institutions

   e) guidance and counseling services

   f) remedial or tutorial services to prepare persons for entrance to postsecondary institutions (may be provided by contract with another agency)

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* *The Federal share of the cost of planning, establishing and operating such Educational Information Centers for any fiscal year shall be 2/3 and the states or other agency 1/3. Federal grants will be made to states, allocated on the basis of population (but no less than $50,000 to a state in a given year). Each state shall submit for the approval of the U.S. Commissioner of Education a comprehensive strategy for the establishment or expansion of the centers, assurance of state or local portion of funds and will then be authorized to make grants and contracts to appropriate agencies as it does for other federal programs of this type.*

BIBLIOGRAPHY ON STUDENT CHOICE AND STUDENT CONSUMERISM
(Preliminary Version)

This preliminary bibliography is intended to be useful to institutions while CHOICE complies a more comprehensive version.

CHOICE does not necessarily promote the views or proposals discussed in any of the articles.

Articles which have appeared in the popular press (TIME, Ms., etc.) are not included.

The bibliography is divided into sections:

1. General background of current emphasis on better information, student consumerism and consumer protection.

2. Descriptions of attempts to produce more comprehensive information for student choice among colleges.

3. Literature on the college choice process.

4. Guides which urge students to seek better information or act as consumers.

5. Government reports dealing with new information requirements and with the student as a consumer.
   Note: Materials published in the Federal Register are not listed.

6. Legal issues between students and colleges.

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James Nelson, College Entrance Examination Board

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Patricia Wishart, Associated Colleges of the Midwest

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Barbara Knudson, University of Minnesota

Elmer Meyer, Cornell University

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B. S. in elementary education from the University of Northern Colorado. Formerly, precinct official trainer for State of Hawaii, with experience in arranging professional conferences.

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Doctoral student in instructional technology, Syracuse University. B.S. and M.A. in music education from Syracuse. Has been a photographer for the Associated Press, a photographic stringer for the New York Times, and is a member of the board of directors of Photovisions, Inc., a non-profit gallery in Syracuse. Was principal trombonist with the Syracuse University Symphony and has played for five years with a jazz quintet.

Department of Higher/Postsecondary Education

Syracuse University

Among the longest-established programs of its kind in the country, Higher/Postsecondary Education at Syracuse prepares professionals for a wide variety of leadership careers in postsecondary education, including positions in colleges and universities, federal and private agencies and foundations, state boards, consortia, and educational research settings.

The Department currently offers the M.S., Ed.D. and Ph.D. although most of the eighty enrolled students are studying for the Ph.D. Academic programs include courses from many departments and other schools and colleges of the university, including the Maxwell School of Citizenship, and the Schools of Public Communication, Law, and Management, as well as specialized work in higher education administration and research. The faculty includes members of the University administration and full time scholars in the field. In addition to teaching, faculty often have grants for research and development projects, such as Project CHOICE, in which students participate.